

MODERN PAINTERS

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You'd be forgiven for arriving at this Williamsburg gallery and thinking that you'd just missed the deinstallation of Daniel Turner's site-specific work "Mariana." The space is empty but for the four walls, each smudged with a fading horizon line of gray not unlike marks left behind by now-removed furniture. In fact, the abraded surfaces are the main event: For this, the 28-year-old artist's first show here, he knelt on the floor and used steel-wool pads, held shoulder height, to scrub and mar the wall's white paint in a gesture halfway between drawing and vandalism, so gently executed that the underlying grain sometimes overrode the pressure of his hand. The resulting smokelike cloud, softer than graphite, is a Whistler-worthy sfumato that tapers and swells, trailing off and coming back again across the sole corner joint, collecting like exhaust on the opposite end of the room. The effect is absorbing: poetic, unsettling, and oddly beautiful, all the more so for being so simple. Turner's materials vary; the Portsmouth Virginia native has used a tray of smoking charcoal to cast soot on seven-foot-tall Plexiglas murals, dipped loosely pleated vinyl curtains in industrial tar, washed Solex glass with iodine, and rubbed iron-oxide powder across a poured-concrete floor. But the steel-wool wall drawings, which have also appeared in Milan and elsewhere, are the most daring of the lot. They are the antithesis of the work of Carl Andre or Richard Serra (alongside whose pieces Turner's rubbings appeared in "Perfect Man II," also this fall, at New York's White Columns): minimalized rather than Minimalist, evacuated. Reduced to the residue of creation, the gallery space in Turner's hands becomes not the art's container but its spent crucible.